Li Lastmer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1938 AV? Burusho AV?

[77] diagonally superimposed on each other, exactly duplicating some of
354 the ancient smoke-holes recently unearthed in Central Asia by Le
342 Coq. A large store-room about 6 feet deep runs the full width and height of the house and is entered by a door at the back of the central stream. It is provided with a minute, unglazed, shuttered window, the only 'window' known in Hunza except in the houses of the Mir
352 and the Wazir. The furnishings of the living room are simple but
513 adequate. Two large sleeping benches, some 7 feet wide and 9 feet
354 long, flank the side walls, and are raised 18 inches or so above the floor. The sleepers roll themselves in homespun blankets or padded quilts and sleep crosswise on the bench like parallel sausage rolls. One bench is reserved for men and the other for women. The hearth occupies the centre of the floor and is outlined by four stone kerbs. The sleeping benches, which serve by day as sitting places, are screened at head and foot by capacious cupboards, one of which serves the mistress of the house for her kneading trough and other utensils, another takes the form of a large bin with sub-divisions to hold the current supply of flour.

415 The normal cooking pots and oil vessels, lamp cruses, etc., are of
324 hollowed soap-stone, often of gracefully irregular shape, reflecting that of the boulder from which they have been hewn. Gourds furnish
322 the usual 'jugs', and wooden bowls, nowadays frequently turned on a
177 lathe, the eating vessels. Wooden spoons and ladles are cut in one piece, the handles being formed by a convenient branch or twig. The delightful result is that no two pots, bowls, or spoons, are identical in size or shape. Unfortunately aluminium or enamelled iron vessels and galvanized buckets are finding their way into the country. We ourselves were, I fear, guilty of adding to their number and even introducing a few multi-service kerosene tins.

241 The greater number of field implements are still of wood, though
412 the ploughshares are now usually shod with an iron shoe or tip, and a
568 lucky family may have acquired an iron spade or hoe or a five-pronged iron fork. A small community of ultimately Indian origin, the Bericho,
326 lives amongst the Burusho and supplies the music for their polo and dancing and the blacksmithery of their simple ironwork: the shears, the rude sickle, the sharpened scrap of iron that serves as razor.

[412] The sharpened stone or ibex horn, which till very recently served
335 for all necessary carpentry, is now replaced by the iron-headed adze
342 which hacks out the steps on the log ladder and shapes the narrow planks for doors and cupboards. The true Hunza door consists of a set of

2; Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 21

HUNZA CRAFTS

ONE of the most refreshing things about Hunza is the absence of machinery. Every essential tool and utensil can be made and mended at home, and every individual enjoys the self-respect that comes from the exercise of necessary craftsmanship. The picturesquely asymmetrical stone cooking-pots, oil-jars, and crusie-lamps have each been fashioned by father or grandfather, or it may be great-grandfather. Each has its own individuality and its own history. The ladles and wooden spoons of delightful and often fantastic shape have been cut out from suitable branched bough or root—handle and bowl in one piece, no two alike. Your own carefully planted and tended willows supply the flexible withies for a dozen kinds of basket, and the man or woman who could not construct the one required would be hard to find. Reels and spindles for spinning, bobbins and shuttles for weaving, wooden hoes and shovels, two-prong forks cut in one piece from the tree or the graceful five-pronged winnowing forks with neat and skilful lashings of gut holding their curved teeth in place, the plough, the frame and heddles of the loom, the treadles and framework of the lathe that turns the wooden bowl, are all home-made. You cure the skins of your own beasts for sacks and bags and boots. When the women want more wool for spinning, any man at any moment will shear another sheep while the women and children hold its legs.

The only work that the home cannot itself tackle is the ironwork—a very recent substitute for stone and bone and horn. An occasional iron pick or shovel, fork or crowbar is brought up "from below" (India or Kashmir) by a returning

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

son, and is accounted a rare treasure; but for the most part local Béricho make such simple iron goods as are wanted: the slightly convex baking-griddle, the tripod, the simple shears, the sickle blade, the iron tip which shoes the wooden ploughshare, the unpretentious iron razor, the rough tongs, the horseshoe, the spatula for turning bread. The Béricho form the only "caste" in Hunza in anything like the Indian sense.

The story goes that long ago—two hundred years or so, perhaps—some prince of Hunza rendered a service to the ruler of Baltistan, and was duly asked to name his recompense. He coveted neither gold nor horses, but begged for a few families of artisans. These were presented to him and allotted land in Hunza where they settled and multiplied, supplying the Burusho with blacksmiths for such rare iron as they could obtain, and with musicians to enliven their feasts and games of polo. These strangers in the midst are treated with courtesy and kindness, but remain "foreigners" and social inferiors. The Burusho will not intermarry with them. A threat to a troublesome daughter is said to be: "If you don't behave, I'll marry you to a Bérits"; but we never heard the threat employed, still less a case of its being carried out. Each Burusho household pays a small yearly tax to the Béricho community, and in return the blacksmiths tour the villages once or twice a year and make or mend whatever is required. You will see a little crowd gathered in the corner of someone's garden and in the centre the blacksmith crouching beside his simple forge—a few stones ingeniously built up to contain his charcoal fire, with a neat, hollow tube of soapstone below it, into which the bellows play; a stone anvil sunk in the ground; these accessories are provided on the spot and the blacksmith's outfit consists of his hammer and his skill. The bellows is a double one; two goatskin bags are fitted with a nozzle at one end; at the other, two wooden lips that open as you raise your hand and meet tightly in your fist as you press down. They are worked with the right and left hand alternately, and the peasant whose job is in hand is expected to do the blowing.

The Béricho preserve their own customs, and though the menfolk all talk Bɪtrushaski, Dumákî is the language of their

7:Tobé C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

made entirely of soft pliable leather, the lower part, including the soles, from yak hide and the upper part from cow or ibex hide.

I wanted to learn as much as possible about the good people of Hunza. Therefore I was interested in their crafts and craftsmanship.

All of the cloth used in making the garments the people wear and the special Hunzan hats are woven on looms that have been in use for hundreds of years. They weave 3 distinct types of material. It takes about 3 days to weave a length of approximately 15 yards of the best cloth, which is hardly sufficient to make a man's and a woman's "chogo." The woman's requires 7 yards and the man's take 9 yards. They trade commodities in exchange for the weaving. Then, during the winter, the men of the households cut and stitch the garments into durable, warm clothing.

The village blacksmith is also the music maker. Somehow, to me, that seems most appropriate for the clang of the hammer on the anvil rings a true music. These blacksmiths and musicians live in a section entirely of their own and they seem to keep mostly to themselves. It seems that all of the blacksmith-musicians of Hunza belong to a tribe known as the Bericho.

These people were sent to Hunza ong, long ago by the Prince of Baltistan who was repaying a favor rendered him by the Mir of Hunza. These people have retained their independence and identity and do not generally take part in Hunzan activities. They even speak a language of their own known as Dumaki. This is also referred to as the speech of the Dona, or Bericho, of Hunza.

These people dwell in a quaint village or a community entirely of their own located just below Baltit. The history, the behavior and the manners and occupa-

326 533 563 tion of these unusual people stirred up an interest within me, and I wanted to know more about them. I found very little data could be obtained from any of the books I had been able to read on the subject.

[173] But after much discourse and questioning, I learned what I had begun to suspect . . . that the Bericho were actually gypsies who had come to India more than 2,000 years ago. From India, as good gypsies would do, they fanned out to spread themselves in small groups over the entire country . . . some ultimately settling in Baltistan, from whence a colony were sent off to Hunza.

Their place of abode is actually a village known as Berishal. It is a known fact that the people of Hunza depend entirely upon the Bericho for their iron-mongering and their tool-smithing and their music-making.

I was very happy to have unearthed this information so I can pass it along to my readers.

[871] [167] These Berichos used to send their children out of Hunza to be educated and the Mir told me that he had to put a stop to this practice . . . not because he objected to the children of the Bericho being educated, but because the children did not return or remain with the trade of their parents. As the Mir's country needed artisans of this type, he had to put a stop to their sending their children elsewhere for education.

The Mir went on to tell me how important these Berichos were to the community. They fashioned farm [414] implements as well as hardware like hinges, latches, razors and many other essential farm and household necessities that are fashioned from metal. Besides making the implements of peace, the blacksmith could also fashion a shotgun barrel.

[651] He further mentioned that each household in the community pays a small tithe as a contribution to-

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

wards the maintenance of the Berichos and they travel about the villages mending and repairing items requiring attention, and, of course, providing music and entertainment wherever it is required. I guess they could be compared to the traveling tinkers of Ireland.

The Bericho blacksmith shop contained all the accoutrements found in the blacksmith shops of America. There was a pit in which charcoal was laid and kept alive and glowing by a pair of goatskin bellows . . . the customer usually wielded the bellows while his implement was being manufactured or repaired. There were many necessary tools—hammers of various sizes and tongs and, of course, a large chunk of some old machine that served as an anvil.

Then there was the goldsmith. He didn't fashion much out of gold any more because there wasn't much gold. Some time ago there was a quantity of gold washed from the Chalt and Hunza Rivers. This was done at times when the rivers had receded to a low ebb and then the sand left on what was the river bottom a few weeks or months previous was washed for signs of gold. The people who collected or panned or mined this gold were called "marooh."

This Hunzan goldsmith also made silver trinkets, rings, bracelets, medallions, pendants, ear rings, broaches and other articles of the craft. What's more, they were set with attractive colored stones, for the mountains around Hunza abound with many beautiful and valuable stones. As the women of Hunza do love and wear jewelry, the goldsmith was kept quite busy.

Yes, there was a wood-turner in the area, too. Whether or not his craft has improved since the advent of John Clark, the American engineer who set up a wood carving school with his headquarters in the old Baltit Fort, I am unable to say. But from the work

302 safety hair removing instruments. So please tell me what kind of an instrument the people of Hunza use to remove the hair from their face."

[326] "I'll be glad to show you!" . . . and with that, he displayed a homemade razor, one made by the smithy of the village. "Similar instruments are made by the smithys in the various other villages throughout Hunza," he went on. "Our religion recommends that our faces be kept clean of hair."

[795]

"I will also have a razor made for you and sent along with the shoes."

123 "Thank you very much," I said to the Mir. "I am very grateful. I was really and truly hoping you'd say that, because that is another item that I would love to add to my collection."

I didn't know how to thank him for all these very lovely gifts, but I was somewhat concerned as to how I'd carry them all the way home. It was absolutely unthinkable to ship them individually or separately because I certainly wouldn't want any of them lost.

With the exception of the silver tea service, the other items were things that I had specifically wanted and had mentioned at one time or another. The Mir had keen ears and each and every item that I had mentioned was there as a gift for me.

To my friend, Cec Brunton, he also presented a Hunza hat and a cane of a little different type.

Not being a hunter it is understandable that I would not appreciate an ibex or a Marco Polo sheep head as a trophy, but most assuredly I would hang or display all of the items that the Mir was presenting to me most conspicuously in my home. And if perchance my wife wouldn't feel that some of them were sufficiently ornate or perhaps were unbecoming to her living room, then I would proudly hang them in my office. In fact, I felt